Nguoi Rung, Vietnamese Forest People, Wildman: mythical or missing ape

Updated: 17 September, 1996.

In 1982 Professor Tran Hong Viet, now at the Pedagogic University of Hanoi, found and made a cast of a footprint measuring 28 by 16 centimeters. The footprint is as long as that of many people but it is much wider. It is said that the toes of this footprint were much longer than those of a human. The footprint was found on the slopes of Chu Mo Ray (Mom Ray mountain) in the centre of the above picture. Chu Mo Ray is near the Cambodian Border in Satay District of Kontum Province.

Professor Viet only recently returned to his research on this subject, through the instigation of Japanese Television which aired a show on the wildman question in March, 1996. Fortean News of the World (Japan Fortean Information Society) recently published an image of this footprint, shown during a recent conference in Hanoi.

Professor Viet and some other Vietnamese scientists believe that this region, the so called 'three borders' region where the borders of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos converge, is the centre of reports of the Vietnamese 'wildman'.

Reports of 'wildman' vary from large to small, with body hair from grey to brown or black and may be alone or with others. But always they are said to walk bipedally. They go by many names among highlands minority people, most are terms of respect. The Vietnamese name is Nguoi Rung - "Forest People". This is the direct equivalent of the name for an ape we do know from Indonesia, the Orang Utan. The minority people of Kontum are certain that the forest people existed in their forests in the very recent past. They differentiate their forest people from forest spirits or genies, some of which they also describe as hairy bipeds.

But if Nguoi Rung exist, are they really apes? Some scientists like Bernard Heuvelmans, a well-known cryptozoologist, and Dr Helmut Loofs-Wissowa of the Australian National University, think that at least some forms may be remnants of an early human population.

The figure to the right is from Bernard Heuvelmans' 1969 description of a controversial specimen called the 'ice man', which he called*Homo pongoides*. The specimen was examined in a block of ice and has since disappeared. This has led some commentators to disbelieve the comprehensive study Heuvelmans published in 1974. Dr Loofs-Wissowa suggests that few detractors have studied Heuvelmans' original publications.

So there remain many questions. And so far no specimens have been recovered. Perhaps we should temper any scepticism with the knowledge that several new species have been discovered in Vietnam in recent years. There have been several reports in the last 15 years in the region of Kontum - Sa Thay alone. Those we recently began investigating are shown on this satellite map (160k).

Recent References from Vietnam

Article by Professor Dao Van Tien
[Translated by Mrs Hoang Oanh Collins and annotated by Dr Helmut Loofs-Wissowa]

Article by Professor Nguyen Dinh Khoa
[Translated by Mrs Hoang Oanh Collins]

Interview with Professors Vo Quy and Tran Hong Viet
[Translated by Mrs Hoang Oanh Collins]

Article about the research of Prof Helmut Loofs-Wissowa

Article about recent developments in Vietnam

A newspaper report of Prof Loofs-Wissowa's trip to Laos

Seeing is believing, or is it? How scientific is 'Wildman' research?
By Prof Helmut Loofs-Wissowa

Seeing is believing -- the Wildman debate from ANU Reporter
Contributions on scientific method by:
David Cameron, Helmut Loofs-Wissowa, Tony Puclin, Vern Weitzel

An open letter to Dr Loofs-Wissowa
By Jon Erik Beckjord, Curator of Bigfoot Museum Project,
who has a definite confidence that it is all paranormal.

The Nguoi Rung Footprint: the rather fuzzy evidence is finally published
The photo shows very little.

Related web pages

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From the Teeth of the Dragon - *Gigantopithecus blacki* by Eric Pettifor

Sur les traces du BIG FOOT

Western Bigfoot Society

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interest in the case of Nahuelito. The Lake Nahuel Huapi monster and her Patagonian relations may have been the first possibly-real creatures linked in the public consciousness with the plesiosaur, an image that is as popular or more popular today in the public imagination than it was in 1922.

Whether fact, fiction, or some surreal combination of the two, one thing is certain--Nahuelito is here to stay and we will be hearing much more about her in the future.

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